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The Finnish Line (S.A.S.S.)



Synopsis

When Nordic ski jumper Maureen "Mo" Clark set foot in Finland, she breathed a sigh of relief. Finally, escape from her famous skier father's shadow and a chance to jump in the renowned Lahti Ski Games. But Mo quickly realizes that balancing practice and classes is more challenging than she expected. So when a gorgeous bad boy teammate offers coaching assistance for a little publicity in return how can she refuse? Surely she can work in a few extra practices somewhere between studying for calculus and sightseeing in Finland? Amid snowmobiling and dog-sledding, ice hotels and Northern lights, Mo begins to discover what strength and perseverance the Finnish *sisu* is all about. Now it's up to her to take that final jump and cross the finish line in style.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

I enjoyed Linda Gerber's first SASS book, *Now and Zen*, so I was looking forward to seeing what she would do with a second book, this time set in Finland. Again, Linda takes a typically frothy genre and adds a little heft--all without burdening her story line. The Finnish Line is an account of "Mo" Clark's semester abroad, which she spends honing her competitive ski jumping skills. One nice thing about this book is that I'm pretty sure most American teens (and adults!) are unfamiliar with Finnish history and culture. Gerber manages to weave some of both into the book. (Imagine rolling

naked in the snow and then heading into a sauna, for example.) The reason Mo Clark goes to Finland is to get away from the influence of her high-profile skiing family--which doesn't always work out the way she planned it. She encounters a prickly roommate, Kirsti; an intriguing Romani boy named Leevi; and her own limitations as a ski jumper. The subplots weave together nicely, with questions about prejudice against gypsies being raised in the strand about Leevi. Mo is frustrated to find that her ski jumping doesn't cut it in this group of athletes, and Leevi offers to help her improve her distance. Though Leevi helps Mo, there comes a point when she goes it alone and really takes her ski jumping to the next level. I'm pleased that Gerber decided to let Mo make this crucial effort on her own, showing us the meaning of the Finnish term *sisu*. At one point, the author offers an intriguing riff on her fun but seemingly frivolous title. As Leevi tells Mo, "You're not getting it. You can never reach the finish line, Clark. Not in your sport and not in your life. You come close, you set the line back. That way, you keep moving forward, keep getting better. When you think you're done, it's all over." Finally, this book gives us insight into a sport that's an arena for the ongoing gender-rights struggles of women athletes. Ski jumping IS an Olympic sport for men, but as Gerber's endnote explains, the International Olympic Committee has balked at making it an Olympic sport for women--apparently on the grounds of good old-fashioned sexism. The Finnish Line is mostly as light as powder snow, but it has unexpected depths. And Mo, like Gerber's main character in *Now and Zen*, is a girl worth accompanying on her semester abroad in Finland. Update: Hooray! April 2011, and the IOC has finally relented. The women will be ski jumping in 2014!

This book was actually really good. It was a quick easy read that was really cute. I love reading books about girls who are good at sports so it was a lot of fun!

Linda Gerber is a superb writer and I make a point in reading all of her books. She can transcend any genre to make a lasting story.

I've never been skiing before so it was kind of difficult to understand the premise of the book. Also I was hoping for a little more Finnish culture and study abroad experience, not so much sports talk. Overall though it was an easy read and a good book for those interested in Scandinavia.

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